



Atmosphere academy

Atmosphere Academy Public Charter Schools Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes September 28, 2022

Atmosphere Academy Charter School
5959 Broadway, Bronx, NY 10463

Board Members Attending

Mr. Jesse J. Greene, Jr.
Mr. Jim Spitzer (over Zoom)
Mr. Alan Dillon
Mr. Colin J. Greene (ex officio, CEO)

Board Members Not In Attendance:

Dr. Michael Lagas

Others in Attendance:

Mr. Gabriel Rosenblum
Ms. Elizabeth Nash
Mrs. Katherine Brennan
Mr. Benjamin Pah
Mr. Christian Roman
Mr. Peter Markey
Mr. Phil Byer
Ms. Lona Nguyen
No other public in attendance

Agenda Item 1. Call to Order

At approximately 5:16 PM, Mr. Dillon called the Board meeting to order.

Agenda Item 2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was performed.

Agenda item 3. Board Reports

The Finance Committee met this month. Those topics will be covered later in this meeting.

The High School Committee and Middle School Committee topics will be covered later in this meeting. Mr. J. Greene gave a summary of topics that were covered in previous committee meetings.

Agenda Item 4. Comments From the Public

There were no comments at this time.

Agenda Item 5. Revision and Adoption of the Agenda

Mr. C. Greene presented the Agenda for approval by the Board.

Mr. J. Greene moved to approve the Board Agenda for September 2022.
Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

Vote Aye: Mr. J. Greene and Mr. Dillon
Vote no: None

Motion adopted. Agenda approved.

Agenda Item 6.1. Benefits Update

Mr. Phil Byer from Schulman Insurance joined Atmosphere to discuss benefits offerings. Mr. Byer gave a brief background of Atmosphere's experience with benefits through Justworks and Guardian. Mr. Byer gave summarized his experience working with insurance companies this

year to negotiate pricing for Atmosphere. Much of the pricing is determined by employee demographics and medical history. Mr. Byer was receiving pricing that was unfavorable to Atmosphere, and went to multiple reputable insurance companies to get the best possible pricing.

Mr. Byer and Atmosphere conducted a doctor survey to factor into the carrier choice. Atmosphere wanted to ensure that employees would not lose their doctors by switching plans. The doctor survey yielded a 90%+ match to the plan that Atmosphere was eyeing.

The Board moved to approve the adoption of the new health insurance plan.

Mr. J. Greene moved to approve the new health insurance plan.
Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

Vote Aye: Mr. J. Greene and Mr. Dillon
Vote no: None

Motion adopted. Agenda approved.

Mr. Byer went on to discuss Guardian benefits (Vision and Dental) and his experience working with them. Mr. Byer also spoke about his experience bidding out the vision and dental insurance. While some money may be saved by moving the vision and dental off of Guardian, it could result in a negative employee experience. Some dentists and eye doctors are not covered through United and Atmosphere does not want to put employees in a position that will cause problems.

The Board moved to retain Guardian for ancillary benefits.

Mr. J. Greene moved to approve the new health insurance plan.
Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

Vote Aye: Mr. J. Greene and Mr. Dillon
Vote no: None

Motion adopted. Agenda approved.

Agenda Item 6.2. Finance Update

Mr. Markey presented the financials for the month ending 8/31/2022. Mr. Markey began by presenting the financial scorecard. Mr. Markey then moved to the statement of financial position and compared August of this year to August of last year. Atmosphere's assets increased dramatically from last year at the same time.

Mr. Markey continued by presenting a comparison of the amounts Atmosphere has budgeted for revenue and expenditures versus the amounts Atmosphere has actually spent. Atmosphere has a few grants that are under review, which is the final step before “approved”.

The board asked about the budgeted enrollment versus the actual enrollment and how that will impact the budget. Each scholar technically accounts for \$17,000+ in per pupil per year. Atmosphere initially budgeted for 1200 students, but it appears that Atmosphere’s enrollment will be more like 1100, so Atmosphere has been planning for lower enrollment.

The board asked about the possible reasons that scholars are leaving Atmosphere. Many of these scholars are leaving due to relocation, either out of the state, out of the city, or elsewhere in the city. Atmosphere is taking steps to try and enroll as many scholars as possible.

Mr. Markey presented the cashflow analysis document that allows Atmosphere to plan how cash will be effected based on upcoming expenses. Mr. C. Greene went on to show the AP Unpaid Bills document which allows Atmosphere to run accounts payable in a streamlined fashion on a weekly or bi-weekly basis.

Mr. Rosenblum discussed enrollment data, specifically around scholars who transferred out of Atmosphere. Mr. Rosenblum, Mr. Greene and Mr. Pah provided context as to why some scholars are transferring out of Atmosphere, such as commuter issues. Other scholars are leaving as they are moving out of state. Atmosphere is looking to hire a community engagement coordinator to interface with families and provide reasoning as to why they should remain at Atmosphere. Atmosphere’s local team must identify scholars ahead of time who are potential transfers, and flag those to key stakeholders who will try to convince families to remain at Atmosphere.

Agenda Item 6.3. Board Meeting Minutes

Mr. Rosenblum presented the August Board meeting minutes for approval by the Board. These were sent to the Board in advance for their review.

Mr. J. Greene moved to approve the Board meeting minutes for August 2022.
Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

Vote Aye: Mr. J. Greene and Mr. Dillon
Vote no: None

Agenda Item 6.4. Middle School Update

Mrs. Brennan discussed Back to School Night while Mr. C. Greene displayed some pictures. Every staff member had a role in Back to School Night. Teachers conducted mini-presentations for families who were able to learn about the content being taught in the classroom. Scholars were also present for these presentations and were able to participate. Mr. C. Greene spoke about how teachers are adding their own flavor to systems that Atmosphere provides, which is great. Some teachers need coaching on classroom management and engaging scholars.

Mr. C. Greene presented the Grade Analysis tab of the Data Dashboard, which allows all staff to see grade distributions. Atmosphere is seeing a high concentration of very high grades in certain classes, which means that teachers are not being as critical as they can. The Grade Analysis tab will be updated on a weekly basis so academic leaders can track their department grade distribution in real time. Academic Leaders will then follow up with teachers who have an uneven grade distribution to ensure that all assignments are being entered and rigorous standards are being kept in the classroom. The Grade Analysis tab allows this process to take place on a weekly and ongoing basis rather than on a quarterly basis. This will help leaders give more targeted feedback to their teachers about their gradebook. On top of this, Mrs. Brennan, Ms. Nash and Mr. Greene will then follow up with leaders to ensure this procedure is being followed and gradebooks are meeting Atmosphere's standards.

Ms. Nash discussed the Baseline Exam. The Baseline is an exam that Atmosphere gives on an annual basis. It allows school administration and staff to see how scholars are performing at the beginning of the school year. This helps create small instructional groups for the remainder of the school year. It also allows teachers to understand where their scholars are performing to best support them. During the Baseline Exam, there were issues with material preparation, including testing bins that give proctors/teachers all materials that they will require throughout a testing day. This will be audited and addressed for future exams to ensure that the State Exam runs smoothly with no hiccups.

Mr. C. Greene presented the SUNY Accountability report, which provides a summary of test data. This report is submitted on an annual basis, and includes comparative data to the city and state, as available. Some of the data in the report includes predictions, as the state exam was cancelled in SY 19-20 and only a small portion of scholars actually took the exam in SY 20-21. Atmosphere's math scores fell slightly since last year, but fell less than New York City, which is positive. In four years, Atmosphere has essentially swapped places with the city – where they fell in scores, Atmosphere grew in scores.

Agenda Item 6.5. High School Update

Mr. C. Greene discussed a new learning space that was created on the 1st floor of the high school building. There are some spaces that are used as flex spaces, which has allowed us to accommodate more small group instruction and more classes.

Mrs. Brennan discussed a field trip that took place today. 10th grade scholars visited Little Island and the Whitney Museum. Scholars were extremely well-behaved and engaged, especially at the museum. Many scholars were appreciative of the experience. One of the artists was actually at the Whitney when our scholars were there, and Atmosphere scholars were able to interact with her. Mrs. Brennan was able to display some pictures from the day, which show scholars participating in activities.

Mr. Pah discussed the international trips that Atmosphere's high school scholars will be attending. The plan is for Atmosphere's 9th grade to visit Spain and for Atmosphere's 10th grade to visit England, France and Italy. The 9th grade trip would serve about 100 scholars, while the 10th grade trip would serve about 50 scholars. Mr. Pah noted that the prices are currently in Atmosphere's favor. Atmosphere is exploring other vendors that may be able to provide a better cost or more programming.

Mr. C. Greene took a moment to introduce Ms. Nguyen, Atmosphere Data Manager. Ms. Nguyen provided some background on her experience and what brought her to Atmosphere, and what brought her into this role.

Agenda item 7. Executive Session

At approximately 7:33 PM, the Board moved to enter Executive Session to discuss:

- a) the medical, financial, credit, or employment history of a particular person or corporation, or matters leading to the appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal, or removal of a particular person or corporation.
- b) the proposed acquisition, sale or lease of real property or the proposed acquisition, sale, or exchange of securities, but only when publicity would substantially affect the value.

Mr. J. Greene moved to enter Executive Session.

Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

Vote Aye: Mr. J. Greene and Mr. Dillon

Vote no: None

After the discussion, at approximately 8:29 PM, the Board moved to exit executive session.

Mr. J. Greene moved to exit Executive Session.

Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

Vote Aye: Mr. J. Greene and Mr. Dillon
Vote no: None

Agenda Item 8. Consent Agenda

There were no consent agenda items.

Agenda Item 9. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

Agenda Item 10. New Business

There was no new business.

Agenda Item 11. Adjournment

At approximately 8:30 PM the Board moved to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. J. Greene moved to adjourn.
Mr. Dillon seconded the motion.

Vote Aye: Mr. J. Greene and Mr. Dillon
Vote no: None

Meeting adjourned.